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STATE FOR EUR/UMB, DRL/AE

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS VLAD FILAT, HEAD OF NEW PARTY WITH HIGH HOPES

REF: 07 Chisinau 1393

Classified By: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary: Leader of the six-month-old Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) Vlad Filat briefed Ambassador Kirby on the PLDM's attractiveness to the politically uninvolved, his plans for 2009 parliamentary elections, and his promotion of a referendum to change presidential and parliamentary elections. Filat also supported a ban on dual citizenship for officials with access to state secrets. Like other opposition political leaders, he encouraged the Ambassador to visit the districts before 2009 elections, as he did before 2007 district council and mayoral elections. End summary.

Growth of Party Excites Jealousy, Attacks

¶12. (C) In an April 4 meeting which he requested, Filat, who ran fourth in Chisinau's mayoral election in June 2007, and broke off from Dumitru Diacov's Democratic Party to found the PLDM in October (reftel), put himself on the electoral map by claiming an impressive 25,000 signed-up members, 108 mayors, and 85 local councilors. Filat claimed that his party, which has attracted those who were heretofore politically uninvolved, has also been attracting members (and officials, such as mayors and councilors) from other parties, including the Christian Democrats (PPCD) and Communists (PCRM). These losses have attracted negative comments from both, and a very public spat with PPCD head Iurie Rosca over a privatization case against Filat, which was settled ten years ago. Filat appreciated the Ambassador's comments that cries of political treason were a part of democratic discourse, but that using the courts or security services against a political opponent was not.

Filat in Campaign Mode 11 Months before Elections

¶13. (C) Filat noted that he was making regular visits to the districts, and already had local organizations in all 32. Recognizing the problem of bringing neophytes into political leadership, he also said that such people had the advantage of a clean political slate, and stated that he was choosing people with professional experience and competence. Filat agreed with the received view of Moldovan politicians that local elections were personal, while parliamentary elections were a vote on the party and on its image. He was striving, therefore, to have a program and a shadow cabinet in place by the time the party's congress meets in June.

Filat Pushes Referendum: Popular Vote for President

¶14. (C) Stating that other opposition parties supported the notion in private but were afraid to go public, Filat said that he was publicly pushing for a referendum which would change the electoral system for President from a parliamentary to a popular vote, and create a joint

system in which 51 MPs would be elected in local districts, and 50 on an at-large party list. (All 101 MPs at present are elected at-large.)

Filat OK's Ban on Officials with Dual Nationality

15. (C) Filat, who described himself as a Moldovan national and an ethnic Romanian, distanced himself from pro-Romanian members of the liberal parties by declaring himself in favor of a ban on dual citizenship for all officials with access to state secrets—that is, anyone at the level of district chairman or above. He agreed with the Ambassador's distinction that, while a citizen may have the right to two passports, access to state secrets is a privilege, subject to restrictions, and not a right. Filat noted the complication in Moldova, and especially in left-bank Transnistria, that Moldovans with Russian and Ukrainian passports can keep the fact to themselves, while holders of Romanian passports are exposed by Romania's publication in its official gazette of the names of those to whom it grants passports.

16. (C) Comment: Throughout the discussion, Filat spoke professionally, calmly discussing his plans, noting his concerns, and even agreeing with Voronin on the issue of dual citizenship. Filat's major concern was that the international community travel outside of Chisinau, monitor political conditions, and help ensure a level playing field. He showed concern about European embassies' lack of field work, and asked the Ambassador to repeat his 2007 pre-election tour of the districts. The Ambassador said he would continue to get out, and continue to raise, in a non-partisan manner, the differences between the behavior of developing and developed democracies. End comment.

Kirby